



# Milk Crate Theatre Online Program 2020

## DEVISING THEATRE – 02

### DEvised THEATRE & PERFORMANCE

#### CLASS:

What is devised theatre? What are some examples?

How is it achieved?

How does it differ from traditional script-based work?

#### DEvised THEATRE

“Devised theatre” is a very open and broad term!

But this practice has expanded across the globe over hundreds of years, and takes many forms.

- DEVISING essentially means “to make up” or create.
- DEvised THEATRE implies that a performance is being created (from scratch) by a group or collective of artists.
- It also means that a range of different art forms and practices can be used to explore themes and ideas, that may stay in those forms for the final piece, or could just be used to inform storyline/narrative for a script-based work.
- It differs to having a writer create a script for you.
- It differs to using a script that already exists, written by someone else.
- Often, the people / artists creating the devised work are the ones who perform it.
- It can be naturalistic, or completely, abstract, or anywhere in between, but it is quite different to traditional text-based theatre.

#### WHAT WE LOVE

- It widens and challenges the frame of art - what it includes, what is allowed to be shown and how
- It can dissolve distinction between 'artists', and the rest of the world, ie everyday life/people
- Breaks up the divide between the art forms
- ACCESSIBILITY: in the past, and still often now, theatre and acting generally would be left to the very fit, healthy, strong, adaptable people, who can handle a huge monologue and fight scene and three hour show and never get sick.
- REPRESENTATION: people of colour and different backgrounds and genders, different bodies and minds and abilities

Over the years it has been used and / or influenced by political movements, (ie post-war period) and thereby also in “street theatre” or street performance. But it really exists in so many places, spaces and ways!

**Crosses over with:**

- Street theatre
- Mime
- Modern dance
- Performance art
- Documentary theatre

**Some practitioners from the 20th Century include:**

- Bertolt Brecht
- Joan Littlewood / Theatre Workshop
- Jerzy Grotowski
- Jacques Lecoq (France)

**Practitioners from the 1980s to now / still practising include:**

- SITI Company / Ann Bogart
- The Wooster Group (New York, NY US)
- El Teatro Campesino (Chicano company based in California US)
- The Rude Mechs
- Complicite
- Frantic Assembly
- Knee High
- Pina Bausch / Tanztheater Wuppertal
- Forced Entertainment
- Punchdrunk

**Contemporary practitioners / companies in Community Arts / CACD practice include:**

- Milk Crate Theatre!
- Theatre of the Oppressed NYC
- Cardboard Citizens
- Restless Dance Theatre
- Back to Back Theatre
- Man with Carrot

**Performance Art / Experiential / Situational / Experimental / Multi artform / potentially no words at all!  
/ Conceptual**

- The “Happenings” of the 1960s
- Marina Abramovic
- Stellarc
- Yayoi Kusama
- Alok Vaid- Menon

Really, the possibilities are endless!!

## How Milk Crate Theatre does it!

- Within a structure that prioritises safety and accessibility
- What Margot calls “Scaffolding” – ie, a structure of support and base guidelines, within which we can bounce and stretch and explore
- Always making a clear distinction between our own selves and the characters we play – no rehashing or retelling of traumatic lived experiences unless a person chooses to tell a story and feels safe to do so.
- Our lived experience will always inform what we make, whether we spell it out or not
- INCLUSIVE
- It is made BY us, and we design it around our needs
- Artistic Director will pose a broad idea, and we collaboratively narrow it down to a key focus

For example, in the development of our 2019 production of *Natural Order*:

### MULTIPLE ARTFORMS

- To ensure people could access and express in the ways that either felt safe for us, or was new and exciting for us
- Script, Movement, Cabaret, Set and visual art / costume, Sound, Video and film

Please see our dedicated website for more detail!

<https://www.naturalorder.com.au/>

## TASK:

Create a list of **TEN WAYS** to express:

### “A moment of laughter”

For example:

*Telling a story about a time you laughed*

*Tell a story designed to make someone else laugh*

*Creating a movement piece where your body shows what it feels like to laugh*

*Design a costume that would make someone laugh*

*Design a costume that embodies the experience of laughter*

*Paint a painting of laughter*

*Make a puppet show with household objects where there is a moment of laughter*